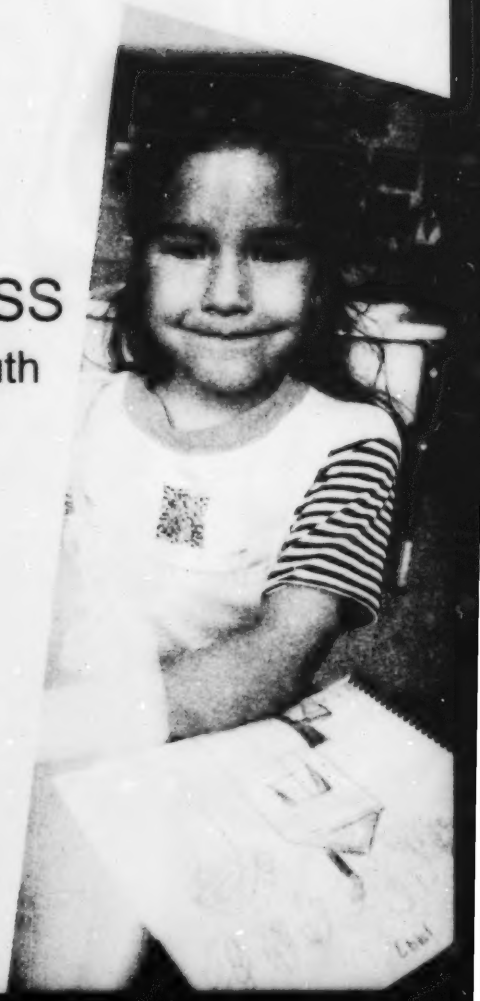
Government of Saskatchewan

# SECURING SASKATCHEWAN'S FUTURE

## ENSURING THE WELLBEING AND EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS of Saskatchewan's Children & Youth



Provincial Response -
Role of the School Task Force Final Report

*February 2002*

Government of Saskatchewan
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# Message from the Premier

## *Saskatchewan's Future: Our Commitment to Children and Youth*

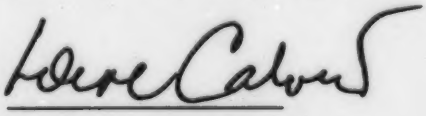
The province of Saskatchewan and its people have many unique characteristics and strengths that provide a solid foundation as we work together to build a prosperous future for all of our citizens. The shared values of cooperation, equity and community have been central in the formation of a number of Government's key policy directions in recent years. They continue to provide clear direction as we work to focus and enhance our efforts to ensure that all of the province's children and young people have the supports they need to grow, thrive and develop into caring and contributing citizens.

Saskatchewan society today is diverse. Ensuring quality of life and a prosperous future for all our citizens requires focused and determined efforts. The priority we place today on our young people will chart the course for the province's productivity and vitality tomorrow.

*The priority we place today on our young people will chart the course for the province's productivity and vitality tomorrow.*

Wellbeing and security have always been goals this Government has sought for each Saskatchewan resident. In this new century, high quality educational opportunities are critical to the success of our young people and to the prosperity of our communities. As the School$^{PLUS}$ model is implemented, schools will take on a dual role, educating and supporting service delivery for children and youth. This will ensure that children have the opportunities and supports needed to complete high school and post-secondary education, develop to their full potential, and contribute to an expanding economy. This high quality education will open the door for every child to the richness of our diverse society, to our history, and to an understanding of our place in the world.

This Response reaffirms and strengthens Government's commitment to ensuring that Saskatchewan's children and young people have the opportunity to participate actively in a dynamic and prosperous social and economic future. I look forward to working with all of Saskatchewan's families, communities, educators, human service providers and young people to achieve our vision.



Premier Lorne Calvert

# Message from the Ministers

## *Working Together – Families, Communities and Government – for the Wellbeing of All Saskatchewan Children and Youth*

Sweeping social, economic and demographic changes, being felt across the country, are having a profound impact on the lives of Saskatchewan citizens and most particularly on our children. Responding effectively to the increasingly complex and changing needs of Saskatchewan's children, families and communities presents both a challenge and an opportunity.

We recognize that ensuring the wellbeing and education of Saskatchewan's children and young people is a shared responsibility. Children's healthy development and life success depend on the joint efforts of families, community members and agencies, educators, health providers, social and justice workers and many others, working together. It has been said *it takes a whole village to raise a child* – today, this truism is more profound than ever – ours is a global village.

***Children's healthy development and life success depend on the joint efforts of families, community members and agencies, educators, health providers, social and justice workers and many others, working together.***

This shared Response to the *Final Report of the Task Force on the Role of the School* builds on work that has been underway for almost a decade in the province. It provides a focal point for Government departments to increase efforts, reallocate resources, and strengthen partnerships with community groups to plan and deliver more responsive, culturally-sensitive, integrated and comprehensive services for children and families close to where they live, in their communities and schools. Our objective is to provide the supports needed for all young people to have the opportunity to successfully complete high school, particularly our growing and important Aboriginal student population.

We are committed to placing the needs of children and the goal of life success for all, at the forefront of our efforts.

Jim Melenchuk
Minister of Education

Glenn Hagel
Minister of Social Services

Chris Axworthy, Q.C.,
Minister of Justice and Attorney General
Minister of Aboriginal Affairs
Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs

Pat Lorje
Minister of Post-Secondary Education
and Skills Training

Joanne Crofford
Minister of Culture, Youth
and Recreation

John Nilson, Q.C.
Minister of Health

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Note: References to the *Final Report* in this document refer to *Task Force and Public Dialogue on the Role of the School: School*$^{PLUS}$ *– A Vision for Children and Youth: Final Report to the Minister of Education, Government of Saskatchewan*, prepared by Dr. M. Tymchak, Chair and the Saskatchewan Instructional Development and Research Unit, February 28, 2001.

# Introduction

## *Strengthening the Foundation for Change*

The Final Report of the Task Force on the Role of the School, entitled *School$^{PLUS}$: A Vision for Children and Youth*, released in March 2001, presented a compelling proposal to strengthen the education system and the delivery of human services in Saskatchewan. While the focus of the Task Force was on schools and education, the heart of the work identified the critical need to improve the life opportunities of *all* of the province's children and youth.

The Task Force emphasized that comprehensive and integrated social supports and services, linked to schools, are essential to achieving wellbeing, learning and life success for Saskatchewan young people. Taken as a whole, the recommendations called upon Government to adopt the vision of School$^{PLUS}$, establish the structures and processes needed to achieve the vision, and act upon a number of critical issues.

The Government strongly endorses the vision for School$^{PLUS}$ proposed by the Task Force. We agree that the role of schools has changed and that schools today have two primary functions:

- *to educate children and youth* – developing the whole child, intellectually, socially, emotionally and physically; and,
- *to support service delivery* – schools serve as centres at the community level for the delivery of appropriate social, health, recreation, culture, justice and other services for children and their families.

This provincial Response presents a shared plan of action for the departments of Social Services; Health; Justice; Post-Secondary Education and Skills Training; Culture, Youth and Recreation; Intergovernmental and Aboriginal Affairs; and, Education. It acknowledges that the wellbeing, education and life success of children and youth are the shared responsibility of many people, including family and community members, as well as a number of departments of government. It puts in place the processes and structures to formalize, heighten and sustain efforts to achieve the vision of School$^{PLUS}$ and outlines concrete actions in response to key recommendations.

***The Task Force has presented a powerful and timely proposal to strengthen the education system of this province. An underlying principle is that all students deserve a high quality education. ... the STF agrees with this and a closely related principle ... that children and youth have a broad range of physical, social, emotional, and psychological needs that must be met.***
**(Response to the *Final Report*, Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, October 2001)**

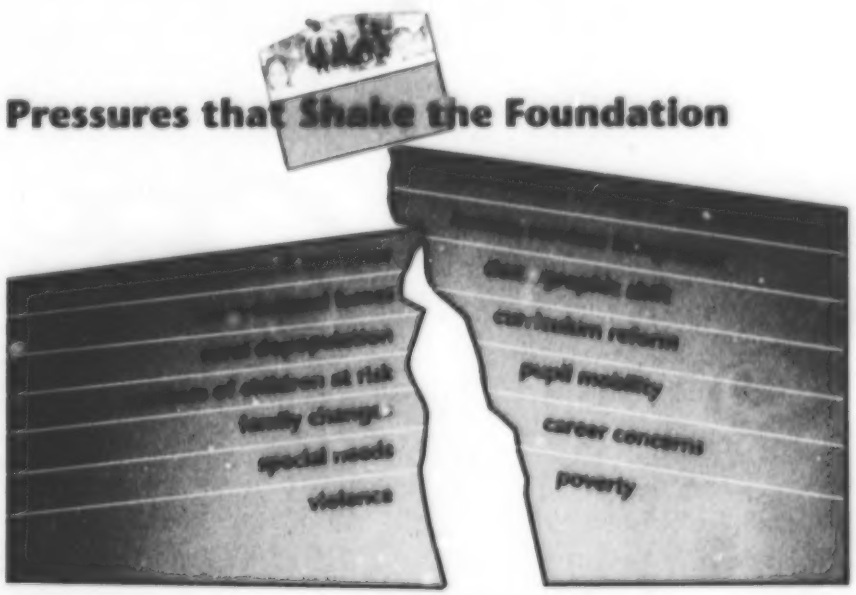
***This is a "greenprint", not a blueprint, as it is the first step in an ongoing process.***
**(Michael Tymchak, Role of the School Task Force Chair)**

# Challenges and Opportunities

The Task Force on the Role of the School identified a number of social and economic forces that are impacting on the wellbeing of Saskatchewan's children and youth, their healthy development, educational success, and ultimately their life chances. In addition, it identified the impact of new instructional strategies, policies and curricula that schools have been challenged to adopt in an effort to meet the complex and diverse needs of students, society and the work force. Finally, larger forces such as globalization and the impact of new communications technologies were highlighted.

*... the members of the Task Force have come to believe that over the past two decades, schools in Saskatchewan have been subject to powerful change forces at a very fundamental level.* (*Final Report,* Task Force on the Role of the School)

The findings of the Task Force affirmed many of the challenges and forces of change that are being experienced across the province's human service systems, as well as throughout the education system. Describing these forces as "tectonic plates", the Task Force stressed they were reaching earthquake proportions, "7.5 on the Richter Scale", in terms of their impact on the lives of children and the capacity of schools.



# *Challenges*

The Task Force identified three key findings:

1. ***The Role of Schools has Changed***
   Schools today must concern themselves with the development and wellbeing of the *whole* child – intellectual, social, physical and emotional – if they are to be effective. To meet the diverse learning needs of children and youth, schools need access to an array of social services and supports. Providing these supports is stretching their resources and challenging their capacity. New and strengthened relationships with families, and formalized partnerships with human service providers and community members are needed to ensure that all Saskatchewan young people have every opportunity to succeed in school and in life.

*Schools are becoming something they have never been before. To date we have simply expanded expectations and in some cases added a few resources. The time has come to recognize the situation for what it is ... to name the whirlwind ... and to build a new kind of institution dedicated to the needs of children and youth.* (*Final Report*, Task Force on the Role of the School)

2. ***Working Together, Saskatchewan People Must Build a Shared and Harmonious Future with Aboriginal People***
   The province is at an historical turning point with the growth of the Aboriginal population, presenting both a challenge for change, and an unparalleled opportunity to create a shared future. New relationships between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people are needed, based on principles of mutual respect, equity and shared responsibility, that enable Aboriginal people to enjoy the full benefits of society. Publicly-funded education has a significant role to play in fostering shared understanding among diverse interests and groups and equitable opportunities for all.

*This demographic shift [the growth of the Aboriginal population] represents at once a challenge for change, and an unparalleled opportunity.* (*Final Report*, Task Force on the Role of the School)

3. ***Service Integration/Interagency Collaboration – Efforts Need Renewed and Heightened Momentum***
   Voluntary efforts at interagency collaboration and service integration have achieved important advances. Heightened effort and more systemic actions are needed, however, for these initiatives to realize their potential in supporting the developmental and educational needs of children and youth. The Task Force identified that up to 25% of children and young people are at risk of not completing high school and thus of experiencing limited life chances, and that this number could rapidly climb to 40% unless significant action is taken. Moreover, because schooling is compulsory and because schools are located close to families at the community level, they are a logical place from which to deliver needed social supports. The need to access other human services in support of learning has reached a critical state.

*As far as services to children and youth are concerned, interagency needs to be articulated, not merely in general terms, but emphatically in terms of school-linked and school-based services.* (*Final Report*, Task Force on the Role of the School)

# *Opportunities*

There are three significant strengths upon which to draw in moving forward:

*The Saskatchewan School Trustees Association looks forward to shared deliberations to move forward as soon as possible on the directions and goals articulated in the [Task Force] Final Report. Boards of education will play an integral role in building understanding and support for this challenging and meaningful work.* (Response to the *Final Report*, Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, October 2001)

### 1. *Strong Support Exists for the Vision*

The vision for School[PLUS] has proven timely, striking a highly responsive chord across the province. There is strong consensus regarding the appropriateness and viability of the model, as well as strong commitment among educators and human service providers in all sectors at the provincial and local levels to make this vision a reality. (See Appendix B for an overview of the feedback received by the Minister of Education on the Final Report.)

*We concur that School[PLUS] has the potential to strengthen the education system in this province and to provide for the diverse needs of all children. The report has received a positive reception at all levels in the College [of Education] and there is a willing acceptance of it in principle.* (Response to the *Final Report*, University of Saskatchewan, College of Education, Dean)

### 2. *A Strong Foundation is in Place*

Saskatchewan's human services systems – health, justice, social services, recreation, culture and education – have been recognized nationally and internationally for excellence, innovation and responsiveness in working to meet the needs of children, families and communities.

Moreover, the shared values of cooperation, equity and community are apparent throughout the province, in our communities, and underpinning social policy and programming.

Saskatchewan's provincial education system is strongly supported by the public. It provides a successful model of a community-based delivery system upon which to build.

### 3. *The Task Force Recommendations Provide Sound Endorsement of Current Provincial Directions*

The recommendations of the Task Force, and the extensive dialogue across the province to formulate them, affirm a number of key policy and program directions already underway across government, including:

- early childhood intervention and prevention initiatives;
- Community Education philosophy and Community Schools expansion;
- Aboriginal partnerships;
- integrated school-linked services;
- e-learning and distance education; and,
- collaborative responses for vulnerable youth.

# What Do We Hope to Achieve?

## Goals

There are four goals for the work ahead:

1. ***All Saskatchewan Children and Young People have Access to the Supports They Need for School and Life Success***
   The children and youth of this province are tomorrow's leaders. Ensuring that they *all* receive the developmental and learning supports needed to achieve their full potential and become caring and contributing citizens is foundational to the social and economic future of Saskatchewan.

2. ***A Harmonious and Shared Future with Aboriginal Peoples***
   High quality educational programs and social supports are key to creating a society that is dynamic and productive, offering opportunity and fairness to all children and young people, and building a harmonious and shared future for Saskatchewan.

3. ***High Quality Services and Supports, Linked to Schools at the Community Level***
   By linking appropriate supports and services to schools, children, young people and families will have access to the comprehensive services they need close to home.

4. ***Strengthened Capacity within the Provincial Education System***
   By linking to schools the supports that many children and youth need, schools will be better able to deliver high quality learning opportunities and improved learning outcomes.

***Schools need to be able to meet the learning needs of all children. If we kick kids out, we are sentencing them to bleak life prospects.***

## What Will Be Different

- ***All* Children and Youth Will Be Welcome and Supported in Schools:** With the School[PLUS] model, schools will be able and expected to meet the learning needs of *every* child and young person, reaching out to and making welcome students who have left the school system. Children and youth will be supported by a network of human services linked to the school and determined by the needs of the school-community. Schools will be *student-ready* rather than requiring students to be *school-ready*.

- **All Schools Will Be Centres of Community, Open and Inclusive:** Schools will proactively engage youth, family and community members as partners in goal setting, program planning, problem solving and in shared responsibility for outcomes. School facilities, expertise and capacity will become a key community resource and, in turn, community resources will support student success.

- **Teachers Will Be Able to Focus on Teaching:** Improved access to needed human services at the school level will enable teachers to focus on providing high quality learning opportunities and better outcomes for students in collaboration with other human service providers and families.

- **Government Departments Will Collaborate More Effectively:** To support and reflect interagency collaboration at the community level, new structures and processes at the provincial level will formalize and systematically advance collaborative planning and integrated service delivery.

- **Resources Will Be Reallocated to Support the Vision of School[PLUS]:** Policy and program delivery will be consolidated and strategic efforts undertaken at all levels to remove barriers and to make services more accessible and co-ordinated. Programs will be realigned to facilitate improved access and coherence at the community level. Resources will be reallocated to support the vision of School[PLUS].

- **Outcome Measures Will Inform Continuous Program and Service Improvement:** An increased focus on and capacity for assessment and evaluation will provide the needed information and tools to ensure that programs and services are of the highest quality and make the most efficient and effective use of resources.

# Plan of Action

This section outlines three elements of the Government's plan in response to the recommendations of the Role of the School Task Force:

- establish **structures** and mechanisms to engage partners, community leaders, stakeholders and individuals in planning and shared responsibility;
- undertake consensus building and organizational change **processes** to facilitate province-wide consensus about how best to implement the vision for School[PLUS] and to ensure sustained commitment to the significant changes called for in schools and in human service delivery; and,
- take **action** on priority recommendations.

## *Structures to Implement the Plan*

To implement the vision of School[PLUS], Government will establish the following:

1. ***Saskatchewan Council on Children and Youth***
   The membership and role of the existing Saskatchewan Council on Children will be expanded to oversee implementation of the School[PLUS] vision. Drawing on the expertise of the Role of the School Task Force, it will engage senior representatives from the human service sectors and community leaders, including the Aboriginal community and youth, as partners sharing responsibility for the wellbeing and education of children and youth.

2. ***Strengthening Educational Capacity Forum***
   To oversee the transition of Saskatchewan schools to School[PLUS], this Forum will engage senior representatives from the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation, the Saskatchewan School Trustees Association, the League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents, teacher training institutions, Aboriginal and youth leaders, and other stakeholders. It will oversee development and implementation of a comprehensive plan to strengthen the capacity of schools across the province.

***Leadership for Community Schools and School[PLUS] at both the provincial and grass roots levels will be integral to their success.*** (Response to the *Final Report*, Outlook School Division, August 2001)

***As school division leaders, our members are keenly interested in assisting in the development of implementation strategies. It will be through commitment and support at the school division level that change will occur.*** (Response to the *Final Report*, Saskatchewan League of Educational Administrators, Directors and Superintendents, October 2001)

3. ***Interdepartmental Children and Family Services Integration Forum***
Comprised of senior officials from Government's human service departments, this table, together with the Saskatchewan Council on Children and Youth will engage Saskatchewan people in a collaborative, consensus-building process about how best to implement the vision of School[PLUS]. Further, it will oversee a systematic and vigorous strategy to advance integrated human services, linked to or delivered out of schools. It will:
   - clarify mandates, roles and capacity of departments and sectors;
   - realign appropriate programs consistent with core business to make services more accessible at the community level;
   - rationalize policy and service delivery and address service gaps and disconnects and develop solutions;
   - reallocate existing resources;
   - resolve systemic and structural issues such as boundaries; and,
   - define the outcomes to be achieved.

## *Processes to Implement the Plan*

The following processes will be undertaken to work toward achievement of the vision of School[PLUS]:

1. ***Province-wide Consultative and Consensus-Building Process to Determine How Best to Achieve the Vision of SchoolPLUS***
Continuing the dialogue of the Task Force on the Role of the School, the Government together with the Saskatchewan Council on Children and Youth will undertake a broad-based consultative, consensus-building process to engage human service providers, community members and agencies, Aboriginal organizations, families and youth in building support for and determining how best to achieve the vision of School[PLUS].

2. ***Strengthening Educational Capacity Process***
To facilitate the transition of traditional schools to the School[PLUS] model, a comprehensive school improvement process will be undertaken across the provincial education system. Focusing on strengthening the capacity of schools and school divisions, the purpose of the process will be to enable all schools to:

   - **Be open and inclusive** - adopt the Community Schools philosophy and practices, engaging family and community members in close working relationships and sharing responsibility for meeting the learning and development needs of children and youth;

- **Implement School$^{PLUS}$** at the school level;

- **Provide a comprehensive array of integrated services** to meet students' wellbeing and learning needs; and,

- **Deliver high quality learning opportunities** and the highest possible **outcomes** for *all* Saskatchewan children and youth by increasing assessment capacity and the availability of diagnostic information at the division and school levels to inform continuous program improvement.

### 3. *Resource Allocation and Reallocation*

The 2001-02 Provincial Budget made a strong initial financial commitment to supporting the directions proposed by the recommendations of the Task Force. In 2001-02 the Provincial Government:

- more than doubled the number of Community Schools, expanding the program into rural Saskatchewan and high school;
- increased funding to the Northern Community Schools Program;
- funded 35 new Prekindergarten Programs in Community Schools, increasing the number of Prekindergarten spaces by 80%;
- increased by more than 90% financial support for Aboriginal Education programming through Saskatchewan Education's Foundation Operating Grant;
- increased the *diversity factor* in the Foundation Operating Grant by more than 25%;
- increased direct provincial financial support for Shared Services by more than 90%;
- increased recognized expenditures for Designated Disabled Pupil funding by 30%;
- increased recognized expenditures on Education Technology by 50%; and,
- launched the Kids First Program, focusing on early childhood development.

The Government of Saskatchewan is committed to reallocating existing resources in support of the School$^{PLUS}$ vision and to making additional financial supports available as resources permit. Key areas that will be targeted for future expenditures include:

- the Strengthening Educational Capacity Program;
- school partnerships with family and community;
- development of school leadership and facilitation capacity;
  - assessment for learning;
  - curriculum actualization and transactional instructional practices;
  - supports for Aboriginal education; and,
  - integrated school-linked services.

*We share the passion and enthusiasm for a different way of working together.*
(Response to the *Final Report*, Regional Intersectoral Committees, October 2001)

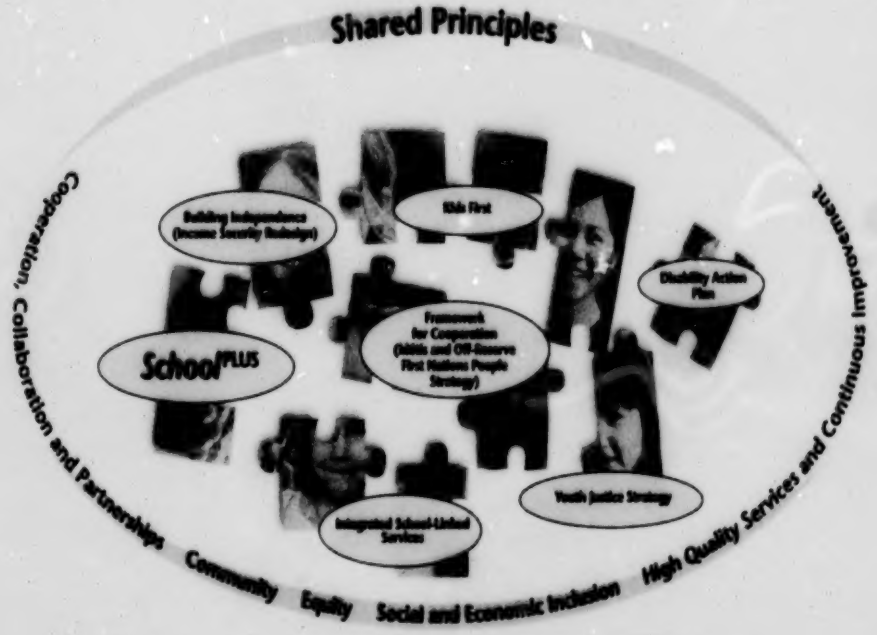
### 4. *Process to Advance Integrated School-Linked Services*

To more systematically and aggressively integrate human services, linked to or delivered out of schools, the Government of Saskatchewan will develop a comprehensive strategy, overseen by the Interdepartmental Children and Family Services Integration Forum described above.

In addition, there are a number of complementary initiatives at the provincial and local levels that support the wellbeing and development of children and youth that can support the vision for School[PLUS]. These initiatives are founded on a number of shared principles and objectives including collaboration and partnerships, community engagement, equity, social and economic inclusion, and high quality services through continuous improvement. Efforts will continue to **focus** and **strengthen** these collaborative initiatives and to forge the necessary linkages to the School[PLUS] model. The following figure illustrates a number of the provincial initiatives that complement School[PLUS].

**Saskatchewan Human Services Policies and Programs**

**In Support of Child and Family Wellbeing**



# *Key Priorities for Action*

The *Final Report of the Task Force on the Role of the School* presented 97 recommendations of varying scope, magnitude and impact. Government has endorsed the vision of School$^{PLUS}$, as recommended. In addition, there are a number of key recommendations that require priority focus and action. These include:

1. ***Structures and Processes to Implement the Vision***
   (Recommendations 2.2, 3.2, 3.3, 3.7, 24.1, 24.2, 24.3)
   As outlined above, Government will restructure the Saskatchewan Council on Children and Youth and establish the Strengthening Educational Capacity Forum and the Interdepartmental Children and Family Services Integration Forum. These structures will oversee implementation processes identified above to achieve the vision of School$^{PLUS}$.

2. ***All Schools Adopt Community School Philosophy***
   (Recommendation 1.1, 1.3)
   In 2001-02, Government doubled funding for Community Schools. Future commitments will be made to support schools in high need areas to become Community Schools. Government will promote the adoption of the Community School philosophy in all schools.

   Government strongly endorses the concept of adopting the Community Schools philosophy for all schools. Through the Strengthening Educational Capacity process, all schools will be encouraged to become more open and inclusive and able to meet the learning needs of *all* students. As centres of community, schools will be assisted in establishing or strengthening partnerships with families, community organizations and youth. Existing inservice and organizational change supports for Community Schools will be expanded.

3. ***Interagency Responsibility for School$^{PLUS}$*** (Recommendation 2.1, 2.2)
   The Task Force called for all human service departments to share responsibility for School$^{PLUS}$. The **consensus building process** described above will promote broad understanding and support for the vision. In addition, the restructured **Saskatchewan Council on Children and Youth** will engage community leaders as active partners with Government, sharing responsibility for the achievement of objectives related to:
   - the development of the School$^{PLUS}$ network of integrated services linked to or based in schools;
   - ongoing implementation of the recommendations of the Task Force on the Role of the School; and,

- priorities for achieving the wellbeing of children and youth, particularly through providing supports to meet their learning needs.

The **Interdepartmental Children and Family Services Integration Forum** will ensure that responsibility for the vision of School$^{PLUS}$ is shared across the human services departments of government. In addition, it will take steps to remove barriers and provide concrete support for the vision.

4. ***Linking Human Services to Schools – School$^{PLUS}$*** (Recommendation 3.1)
The Government of Saskatchewan strongly endorses the principle of the school serving as a focal point for the delivery of appropriate services for children and youth. Resources will be reallocated to support the vision of School$^{PLUS}$ and the creation of more "full-service schools" such as Nutana Collegiate in Saskatoon.

5. ***Prekindergarten*** (Recommendation 9.2)
Prevention and early intervention have been key strategies in a number of Government policies and programs over the past ten years. In the 2001-02 budget, the Government of Saskatchewan increased by 80% the number of Prekindergarten spaces. This trend will be continued as resources permit.

The Government's **Kids First** initiative has elements that focus on the needs of all children from prenatal to age five, and a strong focus on children and families living in challenging circumstances. Saskatchewan will receive $73 million in federal funding over the next five years for early childhood development programs. Home visiting is the cornerstone of Kids First. A team that includes lay home visitors and alcohol, drug and mental health staff offers support to high-risk women in target communities before and after births. Childcare and early learning will be expanded and parents will be provided with support programs built around parenting, literacy, nutrition and other needs.

6. ***Hidden Youth*** (Recommendation 10.1)
Children not in school are a vital concern for this Government. Young people who do not finish high school are at a serious disadvantage in terms of personal and economic life success. The Government of Saskatchewan, together with its partners, will develop a strategy to address the issues of hidden youth. This will include:
   - implementation of a new student data system with the capacity to identify and track student enrolment, movement and retention;
   - focused efforts at all levels of the education and human services systems to provide integrated programs and supports that will assist young people to stay in school and to return to school;

- creation of linkages between education programs in custody facilities and schools; and,
- continuation and expansion of the Youth Justice Strategy that provides community-based alternatives to custody for youth in conflict with the law.

7. ***Aboriginal Education*** (Recommendation 19.1 - 19.7)
The Aboriginal Education Provincial Advisory Committee (AEPAC) has a five year action plan for the years 2000 to 2005 that provides a comprehensive outline of objectives to be achieved and indicators of success toward two goals:
   - Aboriginal young people with Grade 12 and post-secondary education, flourishing in all professions.
   - Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students and young people knowledgeable about Aboriginal peoples and their history.

   The plan and efforts currently underway focus on school change in four areas:
   - Cultural affirmation and school climate;
   - Shared decision making;
   - Core Curriculum actualization; and,
   - Life Long Learning.

   Aboriginal Education continues to be a top priority for Saskatchewan Education. In its 2001-02 budget, the department doubled the number of positions in the Aboriginal Education Unit of Saskatchewan Education, and allocated significant financial resources in the Foundation Operating Grant to Aboriginal Partnerships. A number of highly innovative partnerships are underway or being developed between boards of education and First Nations across the province modelling shared management as well as culturally affirming learning programs.

   All of the above activities within the education sector support the education objectives of the Government's Métis and Off-Reserve First Nations People Strategy, which promote increased student retention and achievement and high school completion among Aboriginal students in provincial schools.

8. ***High School Change*** (Recommendation 17.1-17.6)
In summary, the recommendations related to secondary schools called for greater diversity in high school program design and greater responsiveness to the needs of students and their communities. The Government of Saskatchewan agrees that secondary, as well as elementary school programming, must be driven by the learning needs of children and youth.

The expansion of the Community School Program into secondary and Kindergarten to Grade 12 (K-12) schools this year, supported school boards wishing to implement innovative and responsive learning programs for young people.

Currently, Saskatchewan Education is developing "effective practice" guidelines for secondary schools, that will include clarification of changing roles and responsibilities, the importance of youth engagement, and the benefits of community and business partnerships.

9. ***Distance Education*** (Recommendation 14.1, 14.2)
In cooperation with its education partners, Saskatchewan Education is building upon past learning technology initiatives, such as the Evergreen Curriculum, to ensure that teaching and learning across the province are supported by the appropriate technologies through a comprehensive E-Learning Strategy. Increased access to high-speed Internet connections through CommunityNet is making on-line learning resources and courses more easily available to students and teachers at lower costs to boards of education. Over the next three years, all Saskatchewan schools will have access to the Internet.

The goal of the E-Learning Strategy is to ensure that teachers and learners have:

- skills in the use of technology for the teaching/learning process;
- access to the global village of human experience, knowledge, information and training;
- access to the Evergreen Curriculum, a growing/evolving tool in support of the Saskatchewan curriculum; and,
- access to the Saskatchewan Internet Services Web Site.

10. ***Extracurricular Activities*** (Recommendation 16.1 – 16.4)
The Government of Saskatchewan has demonstrated its strong commitment to the physical, social and cultural wellbeing of provincial youth through the establishment of a new department of government in 2001 – Saskatchewan Culture, Youth and Recreation. Government will develop stronger linkages among province-wide cultural, sport and recreation associations and school boards and schools.

# Conclusion

The Task Force on the Role of the School has presented Government with both a challenge and an opportunity. For over a decade, human service departments have been pursuing innovative and collaborative approaches to strengthen service delivery so that all of the province's citizens enjoy a high quality of life. Issues of poverty, family and community instability and the challenges faced by Saskatchewan's growing Aboriginal population have made this work urgent.

The School[PLUS] vision, proposed by the Task Force and adopted by the Government, presents a timely and compelling opportunity. It provides a viable model to focus and heighten our shared efforts toward ensuring that every child and young person has the supports needed for wellbeing and success in school and life.

*Working together with a common focus on the wellbeing and education of our young people provides an opportunity to appreciate our differences and build a shared future.* (Premier Lorne Calvert)

The processes and actions outlined in this document will serve to develop consensus around how best to implement the School[PLUS] vision, and strengthen the capacity of the education system and other human service systems to work together more effectively. The goals before us will not be achieved overnight, but they must and can be realized by working together to secure Saskatchewan's future. Government is making a long-term commitment.

This Response and action plan build on the strong foundation provided by Saskatchewan's education and human service delivery systems. The vision for School[PLUS] provides a "greenprint" for strengthening these systems and supports to maximize the potential of all Saskatchewan's people, securing a rich and prosperous social and economic future for the province.

# Appendices

## *Appendix A: Overview of the Process of the Task Force and Public Dialogue on the Role of the School*

The Minister of Education established a Task Force and Public Dialogue in May 1999 to seek shared understanding among educators, stakeholders and the general public regarding the challenges and responsibilities of schools, and to determine the gap between public expectations and the capacity of schools. The Task Force engaged in two phases of public dialogue in the preparation of its Final Report. The dialogue was conducted in 25 communities, involving a range of stakeholders, including human services organizations, boards of education, health boards, police, business and community members.

The Task Force received a total of 117 submissions from community school workers, community service workers, educational administrators, parents and trustees, post-secondary educators, students, teachers, unions, Aboriginal groups and the business sector. In addition, the Task Force met individually with a number of stakeholder groups. The information collected during the dialogue formed the basis for the recommendations included in the report.

*School*$^{PLUS}$ *– A Vision for Children and Youth: Final Report to the Minister of Education, Government of Saskatchewan* was released in March 2001. Throughout the spring and fall of 2001, members of the Task Force met with a range of groups to provide additional explanation and to discuss the Final Report. All stakeholders and individuals were invited to respond to the Final Report. As a result, 26 responses were received from provincial education partner organizations, boards of education, professional associations, individuals and university faculties. These responses are summarized in Appendix B.

# *Appendix B:*
## *Summary of the Feedback Received on the Final Report of the Role of the School Task Force*

The Minister of Education received 26 formal submissions regarding the *School*$^{PLUS}$ *– A Vision for Children and Youth: Final Report to the Minister of Education, Government of Saskatchewan*. Responses were submitted by the educational partners, boards of education, professional organizations, individual educators and one health district administrator.

The submissions expressed:

- strong consensus of support for the vision;
- the need for a coherent and inclusive transition process;
- general support for the Community School philosophy for all schools;
- strong support for integrated school-linked services;
- recognition of the need to define changed roles and responsibilities; and,
- the importance of resources and supports for the vision.

**Support for the Vision**

All of the respondents support the direction, spirit and general intent of the vision. Some saw the vision as part of a new direction for education and for services to children and youth. Many were encouraged by the vision being offered to the citizens of Saskatchewan.

There was appreciation for the inclusive and extensive consultation process used by the Task Force and for the opportunity to provide feedback on the recommendations. Many respondents offered compliments to the Minister and to the Government for their leadership in bringing forward the issue of the role of the school and for the excellent work already underway by the government.

**The Need for a Coherent and Inclusive Transition Process**

While the respondents expressed appreciation for the inclusive consultation process used by the Task Force, there was a strong desire by all respondents to be involved in future planning. The responses called for increased, in-depth dialogue to take place locally, regionally and provincially. They saw the need to build increased understanding that will do justice to the vision and to the future of Saskatchewan children and youth. Most respondents believe that the involvement of communities and stakeholders in planning will be a crucial element for success.

**General Support for the Community Education Philosophy in all Schools**

The philosophy of Community Education was embraced by many and approved in principle by all as an important part of the vision for schools. Respondents saw the importance of involving the local community and the school in the development of flexible models to suit unique needs and assets. It was affirmed that the community culture must be reflected in the culture of the school and that the school must make efforts to include parents, young people, and the community in creating its plans to meet the needs of children and youth.

***...this report may represent a defining moment in the history of Saskatchewan Education and in provision of services to youth and children.*** **(Response to the *Final Report*, Elementary Vice Principals' Association, Saskatoon Public School Division, October 2001)**

***... the work which the Role of the School Report calls for would bring us closer to a healthier, more just society.*** **(Response to the *Final Report*, Equity in Education Forum, October 2001)**

***All families have prolonged and regular involvement with schools. By using these established contacts there is greater potential for meaningful and effective service delivery.*** **(Response to the *Final Report*, Kamsack and Yorkdale School Divisions, October, 2001)**

**Strong Support for Integrated School-Linked Services**

Integrated School-Linked Services/School$^{PLUS}$ received more comments than any of the other recommendations. This concept was seen as having great possibilities to strengthen the education system and to provide for the diverse needs of all children and young people. It was recognized that a change of this magnitude calls for a massive effort. Important elements that were identified include developing a broad-based understanding, defining clear governance structures, clarifying roles, providing professional development and developing assessment and accountability measures. It was recognized that each profession and Ministry has its own culture and that it will take time to harmonize differing mandates and patterns.

**Recognition of the Need to Define Changed Roles and Responsibilities**

The feedback on roles went beyond the roles identified in the Task Force Report. There was strong recognition of the changing roles and the importance of the school-based administrator and of the classroom teacher. That recognition identified the need for increased time for dialogue and coordination, as well as the need for professional development. Other responses emphasized the importance of the role of the Board of Education in implementing the vision of School$^{PLUS}$. Parents made a strong case for their involvement both in the provincial dialogue and for their role in the education of their children.

***Parents particularly liked listening to student voices. Listening with an open heart to their comments and acting upon them could do much to improve their school experiences.***
**(Response to the *Final Report*, Regina Public School Division, November 2001)**

There was a strong acceptance of the role that students can have in creating policy and in exercising leadership in the school and in the community.

**The Need for Supports to the Vision**

The need for supports to achieving the vision was expressed in two ways. Many saw the need for support and funding initiatives to cross departments and to be a true joint venture among the Ministries. Others added to this the recognition that the key concepts could begin to be implemented within current budgets. Responding boards of education felt that flexibility in funding, within the School$^{PLUS}$ framework, would increase their ability to meet their unique needs. It was widely believed that funding supports should be targeted as close to the local level as possible.

Ongoing assessment and monitoring of the process and transparent information sharing about progress are seen by some as a motivator for keeping the focus on the vision and as a way to keep everyone involved.

***In keeping with the spirit of the Report, the processes for implementing change must value and practice inclusion, dialogue and consensus if a shared vision is to be realized.***
**(Response to the *Final Report*, Faculty of Education, University of Regina, October 2001)**

The magnitude of the changes that will be necessary to implement the recommendations of the Task Force was recognized. Respondents suggested that local planning include local municipalities, parks and recreation and community-based agencies.

A strong theme of shared ownership and accountability at the local level was expressed as one of the keys to change. A companion theme sees collaborative, coordinated support from the provincial partners and from the Government as an important factor in supporting large-scale change across the province.